



File Code: 1950  
Date: October 5, 2010

Honorable McCoy Oatman  
Chairman  
Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee  
PO Box 305  
Lapwai, ID 83540

Dear Chairman Oatman,

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests will be considering a number of project proposals and conducting environmental analysis in the near future. A separate decision will be made on each individual proposal. Please review the following proposals and submit your comments so they can be included in our analysis. Proposals are included in Part A or Part B (attached) based on their appeal eligibility and comment requirements. A summary of the projects is shown in the following table.

Part	Appealable?	Project Title	Forest	District
A	No	Chucker's Lode Exploration	Nez Perce	Red River
A	No	Max #2 Placer Exploration	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	Bear Track #2 Placer Exploration	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	Imperial Creek Placer Exploration	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	Steamboat Placer Exploration	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	Salmon River Wind Research	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	North Fork Campground Dead and Dying Tree Removal	Nez Perce	Salmon River
A	No	Clear Creek Culverts Replacements	Nez Perce	Moose Creek
B	Yes	Clear Creek Pre-Commercial Thinning	Nez Perce	Moose Creek
A	No	Winter Range Browse Improvement Project	Clearwater	Lochsa
A	No	Tree Planting on Decommissioned Roads	Clearwater	Powell
A	No	Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative SUP Renewal and Pole Building Construction	Clearwater	Powell
A	No	Teepee Face Road Use Permit	Clearwater	Palouse

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests have made a preliminary assessment that these proposals fall within categories of actions listed in 36 CFR 220.6 that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement and that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude use of the categories. Brief project descriptions are included below. If you are interested in submitting a comment on any of these projects, please follow the instructions below.

Thank you for your interest in the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests.



Sincerely,

  
RICK BRAZELL  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Brooklyn Baptiste, Mike Lopez, Aaron Miles, Dave Johnson, Christine Bradbury

Attachments:

Part A: Non-Appealable Projects

Part B: Appealable Projects

## PART A: NON-APPEALABLE PROJECTS

### Introduction

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests will be considering 11 project proposals and conducting environmental analysis in the near future. Please review the following proposals and submit your comments as described below so they can be included in our analysis.

These decisions are not subject to appeal.

### How to Provide Comments

We are interested in your comments about these proposals and invite you to send site-specific written comments to us for the *Chucker's Lode Exploration*, *Max #2 Placer Exploration*, *Bear Track #2 Placer Exploration*, *Imperial Creek Placer Exploration*, *Steamboat Placer Exploration*, *Salmon River Wind Research*, *North Fork Campground Dead and Dying Tree Removal*, *Clear Creek Culverts Replacements*, *Winter Range Browse Improvement Project*, *Tree Planting on Decommissioned Roads*, *Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative SUP Renewal and Pole Building Construction*, and *Teepee Face Road Use Permit* projects by **November 10, 2010**. All submissions made pursuant to this notice may be made available for public inspection at times and places and in a manner convenient to the public business (7 CFR Part 1 Subpart B 1-27(c)).

Written comments should be submitted to Marty Gardner, NEPA Coordinator, Nez Perce Supervisor's Office, 104 Airport Road, Grangeville, Idaho 83530. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided during normal business hours via telephone (208) 983-1950 or in person. Electronic comments should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to [comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us).

### Project Proposals

#### Nez Perce National Forest

##### *Red River Ranger District*

##### **Chucker's Lode Exploration**

**Legal Description:** T29N, R6E, Section 25

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

**Narrative Summary:** The Red River Ranger District proposes to approve the claimant's proposal for a small lode exploration project to determine if gold and other valuable metals exist in sufficient quantities to justify further development of a mining operation in the Fall Creek area. The claimant requests the opening of an existing adit to test for underground values. A

small Bobcat-type loader would be used for the removal of material. Material removed during this process would be crushed onsite and run through a small gravity type separation system, as would samples removed from within the adit. Total amount of material is estimated to be approximately 10 cubic yards. Waste material would be stockpiled onsite. This system would be self-contained, with one or two 300-gallon tanks used onsite to capture water collected from the adit area and waste dump. This water would be recycled through the circuit. Excess water could be land applied as needed. The pH of the water source was previously checked and found to be in the normal range.

The area of operation for this part of the project would be confined to the flat waste dump area immediately adjacent to the adit, and is approximately 100 feet by 70 feet.

The claimant also proposes drilling six 1-1/2" drill holes up to 50 feet deep to test for values. The drill proposed for use is a portable gasoline powered drill. It requires the clearing of a four foot by four foot area for operation. Approximately 100 gallons per hour of water are required for operation. Once drilling begins, water can be recycled and reused. These sites are not located in RHCAs or riparian areas.

Some minor roadwork would be necessary to maintain access to the project area. This work would consist mostly of maintaining existing waterbars, with some minor grading where sloughing has occurred in the road cut.

A standard set of mitigation measures has been developed for exploration proposals of this type and would be implemented as appropriate for this project.

Equipment proposed for use in the operation includes a small Bobcat-type loader, a pickup truck, and possibly a camp trailer.

Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and timing.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Marty Jones at (208) 842-2245.

## ***Salmon River Ranger District***

### **Max #2 Placer Exploration**

**Legal Description:** T25N, R3E, Section 12

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

**Narrative Summary:** The Salmon River Ranger District proposes to approve the claimant's proposal for the removal of placer samples from ten test pits in the Ozark Creek area to test for mineral values. The material would be removed with a small excavator or backhoe. A bulk sample of one ton would be removed from each pit. The material would then be processed through a sluice box, and process water would be returned to the pit with processed material. Process water would then be reused. When finished, the pit would be refilled with material, any existing topsoil would be replaced, and the affected area would be reseeded. Only one pit would be open at a time.

No roads or trails would be constructed for this project. Access would be by existing roads and trails. Some brushing would be required on Forest Road 645J, and Ozark Creek would need to be forded for access to the project area. Fording of the creek could be accomplished by the use of planks across the stream channel.

An appropriate buffer of at least 20 feet would be maintained between any surface disturbance and adjacent streams or wetland areas. Some dead and down timber may be removed for access and safety. A number of small trees may need to be removed. These trees would be cut down and piled to one side, then scattered about the immediate area and left in place when work is finished. A standard set of mitigation measures has been developed for exploration proposals of this type and would be implemented as appropriate for this project.

Equipment proposed for use in the operation includes a small excavator or backhoe, two ATVs and a trailer, one four-wheel drive vehicle, and two camp trailers. A sluice box, gold pans, shovels, and gas-powered pumps would also be used.

Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and timing.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Marty Jones at (208) 842-2245.

### **Bear Track #2 Placer Exploration**

**Legal Description:** T25N, R4E, Section 7

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

**Narrative Summary:** The Salmon River Ranger District proposes to approve the claimant's proposal to excavate six test pits in the Meadow Creek area to test placer gravels for mineral values. These test pits would be dug with a small excavator or backhoe to bedrock, if possible, and would be sized a maximum of 12 feet by 12 feet. Material would then be processed with a small wash plant, which would discharge processed materials and water back into the pit. Process water would initially be drawn from Meadow Creek, and then recirculated from the test pit and reused. When finished, the pit would be refilled with material, topsoil would be replaced, and the affected area would be reseeded. Only one pit would be open at a time. This technique would preclude the need for discrete settling ponds.

No roads or trails would be need to be constructed for this project. Access would be by existing roads and trails.

An appropriate buffer of at least 20 feet would be maintained between any surface disturbance and adjacent streams or wetland areas. Some dead and down timber may be removed for access and safety. A number of small trees may need to be removed. These would be cut down and piled to one side, then scattered about the immediate area and left in place when work is finished. A standard set of mitigation measures has been developed for exploration proposals of this type and would be implemented as appropriate for this project.

Equipment proposed for use in the operation includes a small (11,000 lb) excavator, a wash plant, three ATVs and a trailer, a pickup truck, and two camp trailers.

Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and timing.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Marty Jones at (208) 842-2245.

### **Imperial Creek Placer Exploration**

**Legal Description:** T25N, R4E, Section 18

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

**Narrative Summary:** The Salmon River Ranger District proposes to approve the claimant's proposal to excavate up to 50 test holes located in the Imperial Creek area for the purpose of testing placer gravels for mineral values. The test hole locations are all within a previously disturbed area. Access would be by existing roads and trails. No earthwork would be required for access. Test holes would be dug to bedrock when possible with a 24"-diameter auger attached to a small excavator or backhoe.

Materials would be processed by first excavating all materials from the test hole, and separating them by layers (topsoil, overburden, pay material, etc.) Then, material to be processed would be run through a small wash plant. A small sump would be dug to act as a settling pond. Water would be recycled from the settling pond to the wash plant and reused. Processed material would be returned to the test holes, and holes would be backfilled, covered with topsoil, and seeded. The sump would be filled, regraded, and seeded at project completion.

An appropriate buffer of at least 20 feet would be maintained between any surface disturbance and adjacent streams or wetland areas. Some dead and down timber may be removed for access and safety. A standard set of mitigation measures has been developed for exploration proposals of this type and would be implemented as appropriate for this project.

Equipment proposed for use in the operation includes a small excavator or backhoe with a mounted auger, a wash plant mounted on a trailer, and a pickup truck.

Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and timing.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Marty Jones at (208) 842-2245.

### **Steamboat Placer Exploration**

**Legal Description:** T25N, R4E, Section 7

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) Short-term (one year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

**Narrative Summary:** The Salmon River Ranger District proposes to approve the claimant's proposal to excavate up to 50 test pits in the Meadow Creek area to test placer gravels for mineral values. These test pits would be dug with a small excavator or backhoe to bedrock, if possible, and would be sized a maximum of 12 feet by 12 feet. Material would then be

processed with a small wash plant, which would discharge processed materials and water back into the pit. Process water would initially be drawn from Meadow Creek, and then recirculated from the test pit and reused. When finished, the pit would be refilled with material, topsoil would be replaced, and the affected area would be reseeded. Only one pit would be open at a time. This technique would preclude the need for discrete settling ponds.

No roads or trails would be constructed for this project. Access would be by existing roads and trails.

An appropriate buffer of at least 20 feet would be maintained between any surface disturbance and adjacent streams or wetland areas. Some dead and down timber may be removed for access and safety. A number of small trees may need to be removed. These would be cut down and piled to one side, then scattered about the immediate area and left in place when work is finished. A standard set of mitigation measures has been developed for exploration proposals of this type and would be implemented as appropriate for this project.

Equipment proposed for use in the operation includes a small (11,000 lb) excavator, a wash plant, three ATVs and a trailer, a pickup truck, and two camp trailers.

Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and timing.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Marty Jones at (208) 842-2245.

### **Salmon River Wind Research**

**Legal Description:** T24N, R2E, Sections 16, 20, 21, 28, and 29

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(a)(1) The proposed action is within one of the categories established by the Secretary at 7 CFR 1b.3 [7 CFR 1b.3(a)(3) Inventories, research activities, and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity].

**Narrative Summary:** The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS)-Moscow, the Missoula Fire Science Lab, and Washington State University (WSU) propose to conduct a wind research project within a small reach of the Salmon River Canyon. The purpose of the project is to obtain physical data to validate existing fire behavior models. RMRS-Moscow and WSU researchers propose to temporarily install an array of up to 50, ten foot tall anemometers along a segment of the Salmon River canyon, just downstream from the confluence of Lake Creek. In addition, one or two taller towers [32-49 feet (10 to 15 meters)] would be temporarily installed to measure vertical wind profiles.

The smaller towers would have self-contained, battery-powered data loggers. These towers would be a single ten foot pole, anchored with three guy lines. Installation would be done by hand, packing the equipment to each site on foot. The taller towers would be placed at a location easily accessible by existing roads or trails. There would be no permanent structures built for this project.

Implementation would occur between May 1 and September 30, 2011.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Bill Conroy at (208) 983-1950.



### **North Fork Campground Dead and Dying Tree Removal**

**Legal Description:** T27N R3E Section 32

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6e(14) Commercial and non-commercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease not to exceed 250 acres.

**Narrative Summary:** The Salmon River Ranger District of the Nez Perce National Forest proposes to treat dead, dying, or diseased trees at the North Fork Campground that are “imminent to fail” and have a high probability of causing harm to persons or property by falling them. This project was originally proposed in January of 2010, however, because of changes in the project’s activities, we decided to solicit new comments.

The area affected by this operation would be limited to the approximately two acres that encompass the campground, access road, and campsite improvements. Tree limbs and slash would be piled away from designated campsites and burned, and the boles of trees that would impair the recreational experience would be removed. Not all boles would be removed. Approximately 22 trees would be felled. Directional falling would be used to limit the amount of wood removed from campsites or roadways. A self-loader and skidder would be needed for moving operations. Implementation would begin in the spring or summer of 2011, depending on weather and funding.

The District has developed a long-term vegetation management plan that includes treatment of standing green trees and future stand replacement with disease resistant species. Proposed implementation of the vegetation management plan includes the gradual replacement and replanting of all grand fir and Douglas-fir on the recreation site, while still retaining the recreational experience.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Ed Koberstein at (208) 983-1950.

## ***Moose Creek Ranger District***

### **Clear Creek Culverts Replacements**

**Legal Description:** T30N, R6E, Section 5, NW1/4 NW1/4  
T30N, R6E, Section 7, SE1/4 SW1/4  
T31N, R6E, Section 2, SE1/4 SW1/4  
T31N, R6E, Section 10, SW1/4 NE1/4  
T31N, R6E, Section 33, SW1/4 NE1/4  
T32N, R6E, Section 35, NW1/4 NW1/4 (Two culverts occur in this Section)

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(d)(4) Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries.

**Narrative Summary:** The Moose Creek Ranger District proposes to replace seven culverts within the Clear Creek watershed to provide for fish passage at five of the sites and reduce the risk of failure at all seven of the sites.

The five fish culverts would be constructed to be at least bankfull width plus an additional two feet of width to allow for stream bank development within the structure. The remaining two culverts would be sized to accommodate a minimum of the 100-year stream flow event or the streams’ bankfull width, whichever is larger. Excavators and dumptrucks would be used to



remove the existing road fill and old culvert at each of the sites. The excess fill would be stored at a location designated by Forest Service Engineers.

Work at these sites would require temporary closures of Forest Service Roads 286 and 1855. It is possible that a bypass lane could be developed along Forest Road 286 for four of the culvert replacements, if deemed necessary. Past reconstruction work of similar size and scope resulted in road closures of approximately two to three weeks. Delays in public travel on these roads at these sites during construction can be expected. After completion of the culvert replacements, the road would be resurfaced and reopened to traffic.

Activities would conform to the *Biological Assessment for Stream Crossing Structure Replacement and Removal Activities Affecting ESA-listed Species in Idaho National Forests* (June 9, 2005).

The project would occur during the low water flow period generally between July and the end of September. Dependent upon funding availability, work would occur during 2012 and 2013.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Karen Smith at (208) 926-4274.

## **Clearwater National Forest**

### ***Lochsa Ranger District***

#### **Winter Range Browse Improvement Project**

**Legal Description:** T32, 33W, R6, 7E, various sections

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(6) Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standards road construction.

**Narrative Summary:** The Lochsa Ranger District proposes up to 1000 acres of brush cutting activities in the Pete King and Middle Fork of the Lochsa drainages. Deciduous brush would be cut mechanically using chainsaws or other hand operated tools. Brush and trees greater than five inches in diameter at breast height would generally be girdled rather than felled. All slash would be lopped to less than two feet in height and big game trails cleared of slash to allow more rapid decomposition and easier movement of animals. Conifers would be protected and there would be no ground disturbing activities. No treatments would occur in RHCAs. No activities would occur within the Research Natural Area (RNA). Brushing activities within the Wild and Scenic River Corridor would comply with the Wild and Scenic River plan. The project would begin in 2011 and be implemented in small increments as funding becomes available.

The majority of the project area lies within Management Area (MA) C4 (Key Big Game Winter Range/Timber Management) with inclusions of E1, M1, A7, and US. Deciduous brush is a valuable component of big game forage. In the project area, brush has grown too tall and become decadent and is no longer available or palatable as forage. This brush is also overtopping conifers that have become established in the brush fields. Establishment of a conifer forest on the brush field sites is an important step in regaining soil productivity since the catastrophic fires 75 to 100 years ago. Brush cutting increases conifer growth rates and causes brush to re-sprout, providing valuable forage.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Anne Connor at (208) 476-8235.

### ***Powell Ranger District***

#### **Tree Planting on Decommissioned Roads**

**Legal Description:** (Badger) T37N, R13E, Sections 20, 21, 28, 29, 32, 33; and  
(Crooked) T38N, R15E, Section 30; T38N, R16E; Sections 34, 36, 26; and  
T37N, R16E, Sections 1 and 6

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(e)(5) Regeneration of an area to native tree species, including site preparation that does not involve the use of herbicides or result in vegetation type conversion.

**Narrative Summary:** The Powell Ranger District, in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, proposes to plant native tree species on decommissioned road templates in several watersheds on the Powell District. Hand tools would be used. The areas would be accessed from existing roads. The hillsides to be planted were heavily roaded and are currently understocked. Weeds are prominent in the area, and revegetating with trees would help to eventually shade out the weeds. Implementation would occur in the fall of 2011.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Anne Connor at (208) 476-8235.

#### **Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative SUP Renewal and Pole Building Construction**

**Legal Description:** T37N, R14E, Sections 24, 26, and 33-34; T37N, R15E, Sections 4, 6, and 18; and T38N, R15E, Sections 16, 28, and 34

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6(d)(10) Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorizations; and 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3) Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.

**Narrative Summary:** The Powell Ranger District proposes to renew a 20-year Special Use Permit to Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative, Inc for operation and maintenance of 21.8 miles of underground telephone line (26.4 acres) that extends from the Powell Ranger Station to the Montana State line. This telephone line services the state shed, Lochsa Lodge, and surrounding private residences.

The Powell Ranger District also proposes approval of construction of a 10 foot by 20 foot pole building adjacent to Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative's existing facilities on the Powell Ranger Station compound.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Molly Puchlerz at (208) 942-0303.

## ***Palouse Ranger District***

### **Teepee Face Road Use Permit**

**Legal Description:** T39N, R6E, Section 13

**Proposed Category:** 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(3) Approval, modification or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.

**Narrative summary:** The Palouse Ranger District proposes to allow Potlatch Forest Holdings, Inc. to haul timber on a 0.3 mile section of Forest Road 74291, which is a native surface road closed yearlong to vehicles over 40" width due to soil and water concerns. The road would be used in the fall of 2010 and summer 2011. The road would be closed between periods of use. The permittee would conduct maintenance requirements on this section of road, including implementation of water and soil erosion mitigation measures in accordance with Best Management Practices. This road provides the most economical access to their lands with the least effects to natural resources.

**Project Information:** If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Roberta Morin at (208) 476-8354

## PART B: APPEALABLE PROJECTS

### Introduction

The Nez Perce National Forest will be considering the following project proposal and conducting environmental analysis in the near future: *Clear Creek Pre-commercial Thinning* project. Please review the following proposal and submit your comments as described below so they can be included in our analysis. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215, as clarified in the court order dated October 19, 2005 by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS.

### How to Provide Comments

We are interested in your comments about this proposal and invite you to send site-specific written comments to us. For the *Clear Creek Pre-commercial Thinning* project, written, facsimile, hand-delivered and oral comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of a legal notice in the Lewiston Morning Tribune. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. One should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Written comments should be submitted to Marty Gardner, NEPA Coordinator, Nez Perce Supervisor's Office, 104 Airport Road, Grangeville, Idaho 83530. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided during normal business hours via telephone (208) 983-1950 or in person. Electronic comments should be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to [comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-nezperce@fs.fed.us).

If you choose to comment on the proposal, please include the following: (1) your name, address, and (if possible) your telephone number, and organization represented (if any); (2) title of the project on which you are submitting comments; (3) specific facts and related rationale concerning this project that you feel should be considered. For appeal eligibility, each individual must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Additional information regarding how to comment can be found at 36 CFR 215.6.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments may not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality and the available options at that time (see 7 CFR 1.27 for further information).

## **Nez Perce National Forest**

### **Clear Creek Pre-Commercial Thinning**

#### **Introduction**

The Moose Creek Ranger District of the Nez Perce National Forest proposes to pre-commercial thin up to 1981 acres of over-stocked, mixed conifer species stands located on the Moose Creek Ranger District, Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho County, Idaho as follows (Boise Meridian):

T30N, R5E, Sections 1-3, and 10-12;  
T30N, R6E, Sections 5-7;  
T31N R5E, Sections 21-24, 26, 28, 33-35;  
T31N, R6E, Sections 3-6, 9-12, 15-16, 21-22, 27-28, and 32-34; and  
T32N R6E, Sections 20-23, 25-32, and 35-36.

The project area is located about 11 air miles southeast of Kooskia, Idaho and 16 miles northeast of Grangeville, Idaho (see attached map).

These acres are a subset of acres analyzed in the Forestwide Pre-commercial Thinning project from the January 23, 2009 scoping notice. The Nez Perce National Forest initiated the Forestwide Pre-commercial Thinning project in 2009, to pre-commercially thin about 27,000 acres on National Forest system lands, of which 5,033 acres of pre-commercial thinning have been previously approved. The current 1981 acres in the Clear Creek area have been selected for further analysis based on a number of criteria including the stocking level of the stands, and the stands' characteristics which meet logistics for contract viability and administrative access.

The proposed category for this project is: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.

#### **Purpose and Need**

##### ***Purpose (Desired Condition)***

The purpose of this project is to:

- ✓ Maintain and promote shade intolerant seral species. The shade intolerant seral species generally tend to be more fire resistant and longer-lived than the shade tolerant species.
- ✓ Increase the amount of sunlight to the ground and sustain the diversity of early seral vegetation species including those browse species important to big game and to also lengthen the time period that this forage would otherwise be available.
- ✓ Reduce the long-term fire hazard conditions in the stands to be treated and adjacent forest by:
  - Reducing the ladder fuel hazard and the potential fuel buildup from future stem exclusion tree mortality.
  - Creating a break in the continuity of standing dense ladder fuels across the landscape.

- ✓ Accelerate the diameter and height growth on the remaining selected trees in order to increase future timber yield potential and to accelerate successional development to the larger size classes.
- ✓ Improve the vigor of the remaining trees to make them more resistant to insect and disease attacks and less vulnerable to ice and snow damage and thereby promote long-term forest health and resiliency.

Forest-wide management direction in the Nez Perce National Forest Plan related to this project can be found on pages II-16 to II-18, and II-20 to II-22 (USDA Forest Service, 1987). The management area direction for Management Areas (MA) 12, 15, 16, 20, and 21 may also apply to this project. These management areas provide direction to manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis (MA 12), manage to produce sustained yields of sawtimber and other wood products, while improving the quality of the deer and elk winter habitat on the appropriate areas (MA 15), improve the quality of the winter range habitat for deer and elk through timber harvesting, prescribed burning, and other management practices (MA 16), provide "suitable" habitat (existing and replacement) for old-growth-dependent wildlife species (MA 20), and manage the grand fir-Pacific yew plant communities to provide for a continuing presence of Pacific yew "suitable" for moose winter habitat (MA 21).

### ***Need (Existing Condition)***

The project will occur in previously harvested units that have regenerated to an overstocked condition. These pre-commercial thinning stands contain tree stocking levels ranging from 500 to over 5000 trees per acre. Because of these stocking levels, these trees are competing for water and nutrients, thus creating stress, decreased vigor, and decreased resistance to insects and disease.

## **Proposed Action**

The Moose Creek Ranger District of the Nez Perce National Forest proposes to pre-commercial thin up to 1981 acres of over-stocked, mixed conifer species stands during 2011 to 2012. These treatments would occur in young forest stands which have resulted from regeneration harvests in the last 15 to 25 years.

- All work would be done by hand using chainsaws. There would be no ground disturbing activities associated with this project.
- Only trees less than five inches in diameter would be felled, except, cull live trees up to eight inches in diameter insufficient as future crop trees would also be felled.
- No burning would occur in the stands after thinning, nor would any further mechanical slash treatment be done.
- Only existing roads would be used to provide access to the sites. All trees that are felled across any Forest road or trail would be removed.
- Thinning would occur within the boundaries of riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) where such treatments promote the attainment of riparian management objectives. No trees would be cut which are rooted in the stream channel bank. Any slash that could possibly wash down a channel and block a culvert would be pulled back out of the stream channel.

## **Environmental Issues**

Potential issues identified through consultation with Forest Service resource specialists and from issues identified from similar past projects include:

- Effects to soil, watershed, and other forest resources;
- Effects to wildlife and potential disruption of wildlife habitats.
- Potential effects of the activities on old growth.

## **Decisions to Be Made**

The Moose Creek District Ranger is the deciding official for this proposal. The decisions to be made are:

- Whether or not to pre-commercial thin 1981 acres in the Clear Creek area.
- If the area is thinned, what stipulations to implementation would be required?

## **Project Information**

If you have questions or want more information on this project, please contact Matt Bienkowski at (208) 926-4258.



## Clear Creek Precommercial Thinning Project Map

